

W E R T E R
T O
C H A R L O T T E.
A P O E M.

IMPROBE AMOR, QUID NON MORTALIA PECTORA COGIS.
VIRG.

L O N D O N:
PRINTED FOR J. MURRAY, N° 32. FLEET-STREET.
M.DCC.LXXXIV.

W E R T E

C H A R L O T T E

A P C B M

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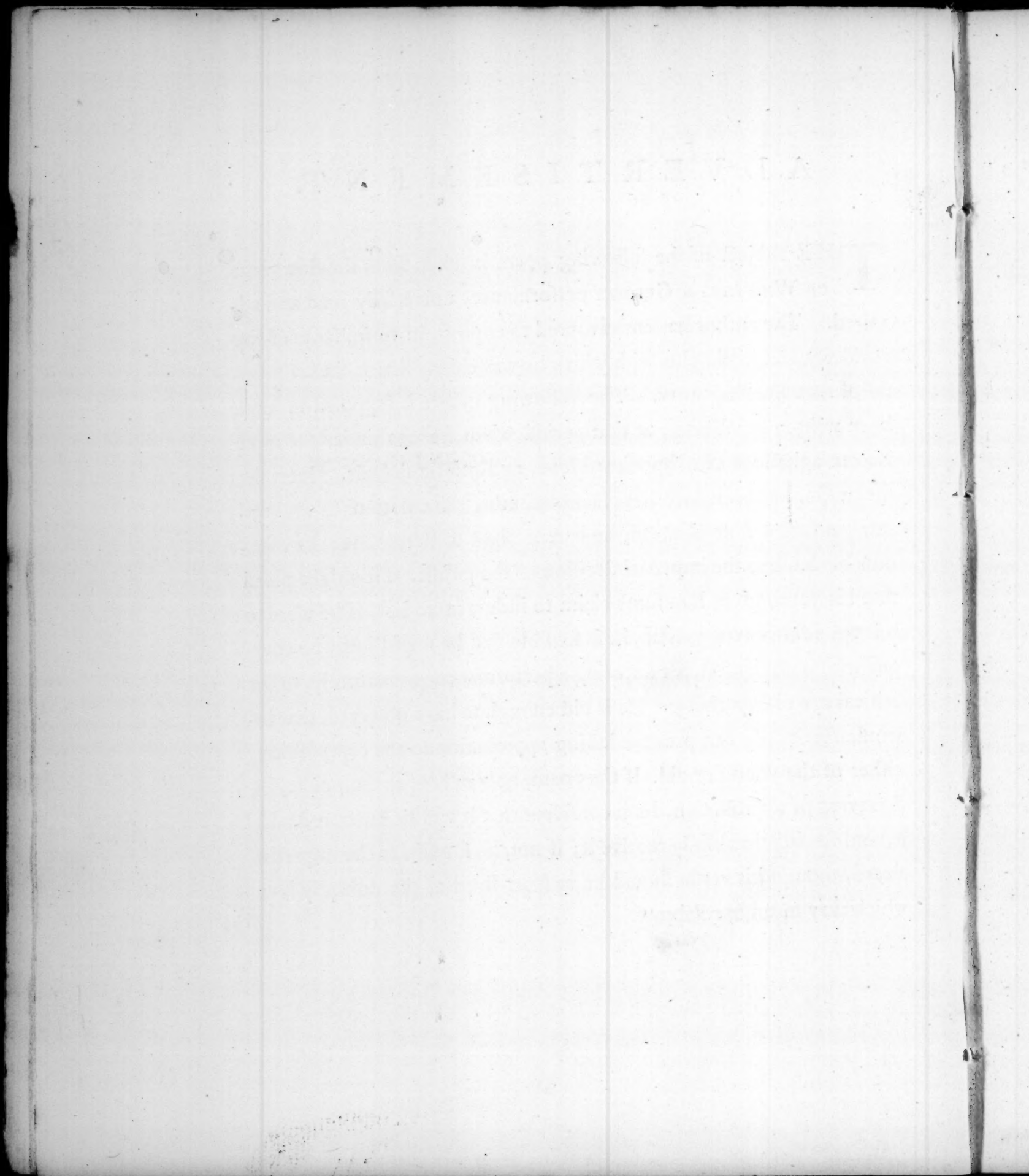
1892

CHICAGO

PRINTED FOR THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO PRESS

A D V E R T I S E M E N T.

THE subject of the following poem is taken from the *SORROWS OF WERTER*, a German performance, universally read and admired. The author has endeavoured to express, in verse, some of the incidents and sentiments with which he was chiefly struck, in the perusal of that affecting story. The following epistle is supposed to have been written by Werter, at that period when he was under the most violent agitations of disappointed love, and frantic despair. How far the author has been successful in representing the emotions of soul natural in such a state of mind, he has no right to determine: he commits his cause to the impartial decision of the public. He might plead that his youth gives him some claim to indulgence, but, if he were to rest upon this apology alone, he is sensible that he might justly be charged with presumption, for exposing a performance, prematurely, to the critical eye of experience. He is old enough to have observed, that intrinsic merit only can procure lasting approbation to the composition, either of the young or old. If the poem, now offered to the public, be deserving of approbation, he is confident that it will be honoured with it, and he will thankfully receive it; if not, he submits to the impartial award, though his verses should be as short lived as the unhappy love which they mean to celebrate.



WERTER TO CHARLOTTE.

A P O E M.

LOST to the world, to all its pleasures lost,
And torn from thee, whom I admir'd the most,
'Ere yet my soul prepares to wing its flight
To the pure regions of eternal light;
Let me, awhile, the destin'd blow restrain,
To weep my passion, and unfold my pain;
The fatal progress of my love t' impart,
And ope the secret sluices of the heart;
Pour out my soul in deluges of grief,
While woeful mem'ry brings a sad relief;
Then let the loosen'd soul triumphant soar
To those bright realms, where anguish pains no more.

To thee, dear Charlotte! be these lines address'd,
Thou fair, thou fatal conqueror of my breast:

Let this sad letter faithfully impart
The woeful records of a wounded heart;
With pity's eye, thou charming fair one! see
How much I lov'd! how much I bore for thee!
Trace ev'ry pang! and tremble, while you read
What dire effects from hapless love proceed;
His ev'ry pang to thee does Werter owe!
To thee, sweet, guiltless cause of all his woe!
At ev'ry line the gushing tear shall start,
And thrilling pains shall vibrate through thy heart;
Stain'd by thy tears, the words shall faintly shew,
Till sense is lost amid a cloud of woe;
Yet 'ere this letter shall by thee be read,
The hapless writer sleeps among the dead.

Yet let my soul indulge its pleasing pain,
And call to mind each past! each blissful scene!
The fond delirium of my love pursue,
And tell how much I lov'd, and felt for you!
Ye smiling days! when nature bloom'd around,
And summer's liv'ry cloath'd the verdant ground,

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Then first my Charlotte blaz'd upon my sight,
 While my rapt soul o'erflow'd with fond delight;
 Lost in amaze, I gaz'd upon thy charms,
 Then first this heart experienc'd soft alarms;
 What melting accents did those lips impart,
 And ev'ry word shot thrilling through my heart,
 Thy charms, bright fair! mild, innocent, and gay,
 Beam'd forth all beauteous, and adorn'd the day:
 I caught thy glances with a sweet surprise,
 And fir'd my soul with lustre from thine eyes.
 Image of piety! when I descry'd
 The lovely children sporting by thy side,
 Each tender babe beheld in thee combin'd
 The sister, mother, and th' instructor kind.
 In love's fierce raptures all my soul was lost,
 In sweet confusion ev'ry sense was lost;
 My heart heav'd joyful at the soft command,
 For, oh! what heart such charms could e'er withstand.

Ah ever dear! yet ever fatal hour!
 When first I yielded to superior pow'r,

When, swiftly owning Love's all mighty sway,
This heart with ardour kindled to obey.
Why gaz'd I, Charlotte, on those heav'nly charms?
Thou, thou wert destin'd for another's arms;
Unhappy Werter must all hopes resign!
Dread thought! my Charlotte never could be mine!
Too late I felt the God's all-pow'rful dart,
Too late I strove to tear thee from my heart;
Delusive hope! Love check'd the rash desire,
And still thy charms heap'd fuel on the fire.
Then was I left to all the stings of care,
To feed a passion founded on despair,
To view thy beauty, and with sighs adore,
With awe to view thee! but, alas! no more,
At distance to behold the lovely prize,
And drink fresh poison daily from thine eyes;
What then I suffer'd, and how well I lov'd,
By tears, all eloquent, could best be prov'd.

But lo! the fatal, nuptial knot is ty'd,
The joyful Albert leads his blooming bride:

A P O E M.

For ever Charlotte from these arms is torn,
 And to the bridal bed in triumph borne.
 Oh heav'ns! while Werter bleeds in dire dismay,
 And night renews the torments of the day,
 The happy Albert folds thee in his arms,
 Glues to thy lips, and riots on thy charms;
 He checks thy terrors with an ardent kiss,
 Those virgin terrors that augment the bliss;
 Then, then as closely in his arms thou'rt prest;
 Does no one secret sigh escape thy breast,
 Nor one sad tear for hapless Werter flow!
 For him, who bears for thee a world of woe?
 Ah no! false Fair! thou yield'st him all thy charms,
 And Werter is forgot in Albert's arms.

What have I said? What phrenzy racks my soul!
 My passion rages! suff'ring no controul:
 Forgive! forgive, O lovely, guiltless fair!
 The furious impulse of forlorn despair;
 The sad remembrance of each former scene
 Storms through my heart with agony of pain.

'Twas I, dear Charlotte, was alone to blame,
To soothe, to nourish this destructive flame;
This fatal passion, that all bounds surpass,
That still burn'd fiercer, by despair encreas'd:
'Twas guilty Werter who disturb'd thy peace,
And Death, death only can the wrong redress.

Yet wert thou form'd to fill these eager arms,
And I, my angel! might have gain'd those charms:
Oft have I mark'd thee heave a gentle sigh,
And trac'd the tear that trickled from thy eye.
Love by degrees prepar'd his pointed dart,
And gain'd a soft admission to thy heart:
But ah, too late; each flutt'ring hope was o'er,
Thou gav'st me pity, but thou could'st no more;
Yet 'twas a bliss, that language cannot name,
To find my Charlotte felt the gentle flame.

Yes; were we form'd each others arms to bless,
So pure a passion merited success;

Each heart was form'd to feel a mutual flame,
The same our pleasures, and our taste the same.
Oh blissful state! when two fond bosoms burn,
And wish for wish, and love for love return:
Not such the raptures Albert feels for thee;
But thou, my Charlotte, hadst been blest with me!
Alas! he views thee with no Werter's eyes,
Ah, too unconscious of so fair a prize;
But oh, what transport had our union crown'd,
And Love, and sweet content had ever bloom'd around.

Yet still, my Charlotte! still shalt thou be mine,
So sweet an object I shall ne'er resign,
From me, tho' sever'd by religious ties,
Heav'n shall bestow what cruel earth denies.
In those bright regions free from mortal care,
Where all is glory, and where all is fair;
Where ev'ry form a smiling aspect wears,
No husband threatens, and no anguish tears;
Where truth, and justice find a pure regard,
And white rob'd virtue gains a sure reward;

There at th' Almighty's throne shall I remain,
He'll soothe my sorrow, and allay my pain ;
And when arriving, thou shalt bless my fight,
I'll spring to meet thee with a pure delight.
Then at the foot of that imperial throne,
To him my sufferings I shall then make known ;
There, there disclose that pure, that heav'nly flame,
And Love's bright passion shall enforce my claim :
Heav'n then shall smile consenting to our love,
And heap fresh blessings in the realms above.

At night, when slumber seals each mortal eye,
My lovely Charlotte in my dreams I spy :
Along the valley we together stray,
And in delightful converse cheat the day ;
I press thy tender hand, I drop a tear,
But thy kind glances bid me not despair ;
I wake—the sweet illusions mock my eyes,
I stretch my arms—the lovely phantom flies :
Bereft of comfort, floods of anguish flow,
I sigh and sorrow o'er my future woe :

Still thro' my bosom fierce sensations rove,
All! all the symptoms of ill-fated love:
Fierce love still rages with unbounded sway,
Ah! what can calm it, and the storm allay.
Now rays of flutt'ring hope my breast inspire,
And my heart melts in tides of soft desire.
Should Albert die! then Werter might be blest!
Might clasp his Charlotte to his panting breast!
False thought begone! ye fond delusions cease,
For ne'er can Charlotte crown my warm embrace.
Then in a thousand pangs my soul is tost,
False hopes delude me, and I still am lost.
Alas! this fatal phrenzy drives me on,
T' encounter rocks, which prudence bids me shun;
I start with horror, shudd'ring thro' despair,
And each gay vision vanishes in air.

Recal, my love! recal that fatal hour,
When virtue sunk beneath superior pow'r:
When love's fierce passion eager led me on,
T' attempt a danger, which I strove to shun.

Then round thy waist my eager arms I prest,
And glowing, clasp'd thee to my panting breast;
When thy soft lips did balmy warmth inspire,
And kindled thro' my soul a thrilling fire:
Each touch was magic, and each look was love,
And melting kisses did the joy improve.
Lost was each sense in passion's sweet excess,
And virtue stagger'd at th' approach of bliss.
Then as I clasp'd thee in my folding arms,
Suck'd transport from thy breath, and panted on thy charms;
Thy voice at once restrain'd the fierce desire,
And in its progress check'd the rapid fire.
No more the tides of joy began to roll,
Bright virtue rose triumphant o'er my soul.
That flame divine th' imperious passion sway'd,
The voice of Charlotte I like Heav'n's obey'd.

Yet oh! forgive! forgive th' impetuous flame!
The gush of passion then no pow'r cou'd tame.
The soft transfusion of that balmy bliss,
Still riots thro' my soul in deep excess.

What kindling transports did those charms inspire,
Those looks of sweetness ! and those eyes of fire !
Swift thro' my heart the fatal poison flow'd,
Unbrac'd each nerve, and ev'ry sense subdu'd.
These arms have folded all my soul held dear,
And one sweet hour has balanc'd months of care ;
Still on these lips I feel the warmth divine,
That melting warmth, which they imbib'd from thine !
Nor years th' impresson e'er can waste away,
It rivets deeper, and augments its sway.

But now, my love ! these once lov'd scenes have ceas'd,
And Death's fierce image sways my tortur'd breast :
'Tis fix'd, my Charlotte ! Death must cure my woe !
My soul with transport waits th' expected blow ;
'Tis not vain passion bears me to my fate,
My heart rests quiet, and my soul's sedate ;
Nor through the impulse of forlorn despair
Does Werter seek this remedy for care ;
But since my woes their destin'd course have run,
'Tis Death must finish what my Love begun ;

Too long fierce tortures rent this hapless heart,
And Death alone can mitigate the smart.
He comes more joyful, and in smiles array'd,
Since 'tis for thee the sacrifice is made:
Oh! at the thought, vain, empty terrors fly;
He looks more charming as he comes more nigh!
Soon as thy hands this letter shall unfold,
A dreary grave the sad remains shall hold
Of one, who pour'd for thee his latest breath,
And sought repose within the arms of Death.
Thy words no more shall heav'nly joys impart,
Or with new virtues fire this glowing heart;
That heart, where love once held a pow'rful sway,
No more shall kindle, and no more obey.

When last from thy dear presence forc'd to part,
Heav'ns! what fierce tumults storm'd throughout my heart;
O'er my whole frame a shiv'ring horror prey'd,
All hopes forsook me, and all comfort fled:
By tears, at length, I gain'd a sad relief,
And my soul floated in a sea of grief,

A thousand schemes rush'd through my tortur'd breast,
Each sense disorder'd, and each hope suppress'd;
At length triumphant did one thought remain,
'Tis Death, death only can relieve my pain.

The wish'd for hour, my love! approaches nigh,
When Werter, with his woes, in peace shall lie;
But yet it softens all I feel for thee,
To think my Charlotte may reflect on me;
These hopes for once my heart-felt pangs restrain,
But 'tis a pleasure that is mix'd with pain.
Full well I know what pains thy heart shall feel!
What sighs shall issue! and what tears shall steal!
To think that bosom shall with pangs be rent,
Awhile with-holds me from the fix'd intent.
When you, my love! whilst ev'ning blushes fair,
Walk forth t' enjoy the fragrant, cooling air;
When oft through those delightful shades you rove,
(Those shades once conscious of my hapless love)

Oh! think how Werter, with a lover's pace,
Sprung from the valley to thy dear embrace;
Then shall you view, with sorrow-streaming eyes,
Where, wrapt in sleep, what once was Werter, lies,
And when the sun his rapid course has past,
And faintly glimmers from the distant west,
My fair shall view, while pangs her heart assail,
The grass high o'er me trembling to the gale;
Then sad, and slowly homeward you'll return,
Vent your soft sorrows, and in secret mourn;
In all the symptoms of forlorn despair
You'll look around—but see no Werter there.
He who has oft a just attention shew'd,
Imbibing virtues as from thee they flow'd;
The recollection of each past delight
Shall rack thy soul with anguish, and affright;
A thousand pangs thy bosom must endure,
And thou must bear 'em, hopeless of a cure;

Yet soon shall Death uplift his pointed dart,
And freeze the pulses of this beating heart:

My soul determin'd, and my thoughts resign'd,
The heart at length shall triumph o'er the mind;
Nor didst thou think, when last I bade adieu,
That those fond eyes no more should Charlotte view.
Alas! no more! what now these lines impart,
Shall rouse soft sorrows from thy swelling heart:
These eager arms, that once encircled thine,
Must soon the glowing warmth of youth resign;
These eyes, that spoke the racking pains I bore,
Must soon their once rebellious fire give o'er,
No more shall they behold the sun's fair light,
Dark clouds surround it, and conceal from sight:
Let Nature now relent in pearly dew,
And join her kindly tears, my love! with you.
Thy Lover now the goal of fate draws near,
Nor does he tremble! nor recede with fear:
This the last day! yet wherefore then the last;
It hastes that succour to my sufferings past.
Now vital warmth inspires this mortal frame,
But soon death's hand shall freeze that heav'nly flame;

These spirits circle for thy sake alone,
For thee, a cause much dearer than their own.
What is that death which doth such terrors frame?
'Tis but mere slumber, and a gentle dream!
Tho' Death from torments shall this bosom free,
Death ne'er can separate my heart from thee.

Glad to the stroke my bosom I present,
My Love affords the fatal instrument.
The means of death since I receive from you,
Heav'n must the blow with approbation view:
Thou gav'st the pistol with a fearful mind,
And didst thou deem it for such use design'd!
But ah, my Love! thou gav'st not one farewell!
Not one sad tear for hapless Werter fell.
Oh! could your heart the tender flame resign,
In that sweet hour which ever makes me thine:
The soft impressions ne'er shall quit this heart,
Nor thy dear image ever thence depart.
Yet love still whispers; yes! with joy I see
Thou can'st not hate the man who doats on thee.

And thou, O Albert! this adieu receive!
With pity hear me, and my wrongs forgive!
'Twas hapless Werter who disturb'd thy rest,
And ruffled with fierce pangs thy peaceful breast:
He sow'd the bitter seeds of jealous strife,
'Twixt thee, O Albert! and thy lovely wife:
For this a just atonement shall be made,
And death already spreads his mournful shade.
Yet Albert, hear! my dying accents hear!
Comfort that angel, and relieve her care:
Soothe those soft sorrows that for me shall flow;
And let thy mildness mitigate her woe!
And when she drops the tender tear for me,
(Past friendship shall exact a tear from thee:)
Join in the sympathy, her thoughts compose!
Sigh back her sighs, and mingle in her woes.
These wish'd-for hopes shall fortify my heart,
Compose Death's terror, and allay the smart:
So shalt thou hope the gifts of Heav'n to share,
And shine exalted in a glorious sphere.

And now the dreary, fatal hour draws nigh,
And Love exclaims aloud, "'Tis time to die."
All round deep silence holds her awful reign,
And my soul brightens at th' approaching scene!
Thro' the brown gloom I cast my eyes around;
And lo! what dark'ning shades the Heav'ns furround!
Concealing Nature in one thick'ning veil,
And suit the spirit of my soul full well.
Shall I one favour from thy mercy find?
Wilt thou, my love! to my remains prove kind?
Where the two lime-trees rear their awful head,
There, there let Werter with his woes be laid!
Thou with thy father all persuasions use;
So small a favour he can ne'er refuse!
But pious souls perhaps may disagree;
Nor wish to rest near such a wretch as me!
Then in some valley let my relics lye;
Remote, and distant from each human eye!
Or let me slumber on the common way,
While my sad fate the marble shall display;

That when some wand'ring trav'ler shall behold
The tomb, which Werter's relics does enfold,
My hapless fate may rouse the swelling sigh,
And tears may trickle from a stranger's eye.

'Tis past! my Charlotte! Death triumphant reigns,
And o'er this bosom shakes his icy chains;
But could my death give quiet to thy heart,
With what swift transport I'd perform my part!
Oh! on such terms how sweet the sacrifice!
But cruel fate so soft a boon denies.

Now my rack'd soul swift hovers o'er the grave,
And now this last adieu, my love! receive.
Adieu! thou lovely cause of Werter's pain!
Yet soft! O soft, my soul! thy pangs restrain!
How well I lov'd thee, 'tis my death can tell.
Farewell, my Charlotte! Love, and Life farewell!

F I N I S.

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A T O M

That when I was a young man
The only girl I ever loved
My heart was true to her
And she was true to me
We were young and full of life
And our love was pure and true
But now I am an old man
And my heart is full of pain
For I have lost the girl I loved
And I have lost the love I gave
Now my heart is full of sorrow
And now this life is all I have
Yet I still remember her
And I still remember our love
How well I love her
Even though I am old and alone

KT W
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